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Wendy's bringing HQ back, adding 50 jobs

By Dan Eaton

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Wendy's Co. is bringing its corporate headquarters back to Dublin along with 50 jobs – and \$12 million in state and local incentives in hand.

The fast food chain Thursday announced plans for an \$11 million renovation of its 35-year-old Dublin office complex and the return of 50 executive-level jobs that were moved to Atlanta after the company's 2008 acquisition by Triarc Companies Inc.

"This could've happened in Georgia," Gov. John Kasich said at a press conference announcing the move. "There was a choice."

Wendy's spokesman Denny Lynch said afterward that the company considered Atlanta, Dublin and other Ohio locations for the 50 jobs. The company also considered Dublin and other Ohio locations for the 388 jobs currently in Dublin, but chose to reinvest in the current facility. It did not consider moving jobs in Dublin to Atlanta.

Kasich said the return-on-investment for the state's \$4 million in incentives is positive for Ohio and its taxpayers. Kristina Clouse, assistant director of the Ohio Department of Development strategic business investment division, also said the exact return to Ohio isn't yet known but is in the millions. The payroll of the returning jobs is estimated at \$10 million. One of the state's incentives is a 55 percent credit on the payroll taxes of those jobs.

Dublin is offering \$8.2 million in incentives of its own.

"From our point of view, Wendy's never left," Dublin Mayor Tim Lecklider told the assembled crowd. He said the company was one of Dublin's first major corporate tenants and is a key component to its Bridge Street Corridor plans for the area stretching across the Scioto River and through historic Dublin.

Wendy's CEO Roland Smith said the \$11 million investment in the 249,000-square-foot headquarters will give Wendy's (NYSE:WEN) a more modern corporate office and better working conditions for all. Improvement plans include a redesigned main entrance and lobby, upgrades to common areas like bathrooms and hallways, a complete renovation on Building Five on the complex, which will include a new boardroom, additional meeting space in its innovation center, a new meeting center that will hold up to 700, and an on-campus fitness center, a first for the company.

BHDP Architecture, which has offices in Columbus, Cincinnati and Durham, N.C., is the architect on the project, which is expected to be substantially completed by mid-2012.

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